



Problem Priests

WORSHIP

We praise God together.

Power Text

"They are dogs with mighty appetites; they never have enough. They are shepherds who lack understanding; they all turn to their own way, each seeks his own gain" (Isaiah 56:11, NIV).

Key Text and References

1 Samuel 2:12-36; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 575-580; student story on page 104 of this guide.

Objectives

The students will:

Know that focusing on themselves destroys an attitude of worship.

Feel a desire to worship God with their whole lives.

Respond by committing to place God first in everything.

Power Point



We worship God when we focus on Him and His power.

Getting Ready to Teach

The Bible Lesson at a Glance

Eli's sons take advantage of the offerings people bring to God. They take the best parts of the sacrifice for themselves rather than giving them to God. They threaten people who refuse to go along with their scheme. For Eli's sons, what they get out of the religious system is more important than giving true loyalty and worship to God.

This is a lesson about worship.

So many people get involved with religion to see what they can "get." God wants us to *give* worship to Him. Give Him our hearts, our minds, our talents, and our possessions. Eli's sons were only there to see what they could "take" from the worshipers.

Program Notes

Lesson Section	Minutes	Activities	Materials Needed
Welcome	Ongoing	Greet students at door Hear pleased/troubled	
1 Readiness	10-15	A. <i>A Material World</i> B. <i>Win or Worship?</i>	Paper, pencils, Bibles Simple games, photocopies of role cards (p.143)
* Prayer and Praise*	15-20	See page 100. * Prayer and Praise may be used at any time during the program.	
2 Bible Lesson	15-20	Introducing the Bible Story	
		Experiencing the Story	Bibles
		Exploring the Bible	Bibles
3 Applying the Lesson	10-15	<i>Make It Now</i>	Paper, pens/pencils
4 Sharing the Lesson	10-15	<i>Keep Focused</i>	Paper plates, markers

Teacher Enrichment

"The Lord had given the most specific directions in regard to offering sacrifices. . . . The sacrifices, pointing forward to the death of Christ, were designed to preserve in the hearts of the people faith in the Redeemer to come; hence it was of the greatest importance that the Lord's directions concerning them should be strictly heeded. The peace offerings were especially an expression of thanksgiving to God. In these offerings the fat alone was to be burned upon the altar; a certain specified portion was reserved for the priests, but the greater part was returned to the offerer, to be eaten by him and his friends in a sacrificial feast. Thus

all hearts were to be directed, in gratitude and faith, to the great Sacrifice that was to take away the sin of the world.

"[The] irreverence on the part of the priests soon robbed the service of its holy and solemn significance, and the people 'abhorred the offering of the Lord.' The great antitypical sacrifice to which they were to look forward was no longer recognized" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 576).

How do I focus on God's power rather than my own? What evidence is there in my life that I am committed to putting God first? What struggle is taking more of my time than praise is every day? How can I focus more on God and less on me?

Teaching the Lesson

Welcome

Welcome students at the door and direct them to their table/small group leader. Have leader ask how their week has been—what they're pleased/troubled about. Then debrief student(s) on their Bible study activities last week. Say: **What was the most interesting part of the Bible story? What activity did you find the most helpful? Which activity was the most fun?** (The leader should know what the students' activities were for the past week so he/she can direct discussion.) Have students begin the readiness activity of your choice.

1

Readiness Activities

Select the activity or activities that are most appropriate for your situation.

You Need:

- paper
- pencils
- Bibles

A. A Material World

Distribute sheets of paper and pencils to each person. Ask them to list five or six important things they own, leaving a space under each one. Then they are to add two or three things they would really like to own. When most have accomplished this, they are to place one of the following marks beside each item they have listed. Say: **Place a K beside ones you will keep permanently. Mark Q for ones that will be used up or wear out quickly. U can stand for items that are really needed and useful.** When they have categorized each item, ask them to write beneath them a way that they could be used for worshiping or responding to God. (Ideas: Some items could be shared with others to bring them joy; a stereo could be used to play praise music to God.)

Debriefing

Ask each of the students to share one or two of the items they have listed, and how they could use them to honor and worship God. Ask: **How did you feel about listing your most important material possessions? Do you feel you have many, or few? How do you feel about the amount you possess? For what do you use these possessions?**

Say: **Materialism consists of storing up and using things for only our own benefit. Let's find and read Isaiah 56:11.** Allow time for them to find it and then read it aloud together. **Our story today is about young men who fit this description. They weren't concerned about worshipping God; they were concerned about taking whatever they wanted. Worship is not just something we do Sabbath morning; it is a way of life when we love God. And**



We worship God when we focus on Him and His power.

B. Win or Worship?

You Need:

- simple games
- photocopies of role cards (p. 143)

Form groups of six or fewer. Give each group a simple game that their number of persons can play.

Before students start playing, ask one person from each group to serve as an observer. Take the observers aside and inform them it's their responsibility to watch each person in the group during the game. Show them the role cards (p.143) so they know what to watch for. Have them take notes on how the players act and what their actions do to the game, but

don't have observers say anything to the group.

Next, hand out the role cards (p.143) to the other group participants, and tell them not to let anyone see what their roles are in the game. Don't tell students they all have the same role. Instruct the players to remember it's important to stay in their roles at all times while playing the game.

Let the games go on for five to eight minutes. Watch for any deteriorating relationships. Then ask observers to report what happened in each of their groups and who did what to whom.

Debriefing

Ask: How did you feel as you were playing the game? How did you feel toward the other players? How is being successful in the world sometimes like this? How does this approach to life affect other people? God?

Say: You've just experienced what it means to live in a materialistic world. It's part of our nature to sin, to focus on ourselves and what we want and think we need. Let's find and read Isaiah 56:11. Allow time for them to find it and then read it aloud together. Our story today is about young men who fit this description. They weren't concerned about worshiping God; they were concerned about taking whatever they wanted. Worship is not just something we do Sabbath morning; it is a way of life when we love God. And



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(Adapted from *More Smart Choices for PreTeen Kids* [Loveland, Colo.: Group Publishing, 1999], pp. 107, 111. Used by permission.)

Prayer and Praise



Fellowship

Report the students' joys and sorrows (pleased and troubled) as reported to you at the door (as appropriate). If they have given you permission, share one or two special items from students' Bible study during the week. Acknowledge any birthdays, special events, or achievements. Give a special, warm greeting to all visitors.

Suggested Songs

"You Are My Everything" (*He Is Our Song*, No. 44)

"Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus" (*He Is Our Song*, No. 45)

"We Are an Offering" (*He Is Our Song*, No. 136)

"Seek Ye First" (*He Is Our Song*, No. 83)

"All That I Need" (*Praise Time*, No. 64)

Prayer

Say: **I would like you all to bow your heads and close your eyes as I speak.** Wait for them to comply. **There are probably times in the past few weeks when all of us have felt like keeping something all to ourselves and not sharing. Or we have seen something another person has that we really wished were ours. I am going to be quiet for a moment, and I would like you, in your hearts, to talk about these times to God in a silent confession.**

Wait 20 to 30 seconds, and then pray a corporate prayer of confession finishing with an expressed desire to focus on God, and not ourselves, as a way of worshiping Him.

Mission

Use *Adventist Mission for Youth and Adults* or another mission report available to you.

Offering

Say: **Bringing our offerings each week is one way God has provided for us to worship Him and help to share the good news about Him with the rest of the world.**

* Prayer and Praise may be used at any time during the program.

2

Bible Lesson

Introducing the Bible Story

Say: **In the activities we have done today we have learned that we can worship God in everything we do by focusing on Him instead of on ourselves. When we focus on Him, we are not living our lives in an attempt to be number one and get everything we can for ourselves. Our story today is about two young men who, even though they had jobs working for the church, used their positions to please themselves and not to help in the worship of God.**

Experiencing the Story

You Need:

- Bibles

Ask students to find 1 Samuel 2:12-36. Ask volunteers to read the verses you specify and

then discuss each segment after it has been read.

Have a volunteer read verses 12-17.

Ask: **What do you think is going on here?** (Encourage responses.)

Say: **These sacrifices mentioned were peace offerings. Only the fat of these offerings was to be burned for the Lord. God's plan was that the priests get something from the offering—only enough for them to eat. The rest of the meat, however, God intended for the person sacrificing to enjoy with their friends** (see *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 576). **The person sacrificing was to have a sacrificial feast. While he and his friends ate, they were to be grateful for and have faith in Jesus, who was to be the great sacrifice that would make peace between man and God.**

Ask: **What were Eli's sons doing to the worship of God by their**

greed and self-centeredness? (making people hate the whole sacrificial experience; keeping them from having the feast with their friends; keeping them from reflecting on Christ's sacrifice to make peace with man. Encourage other insights and discussion.)

Have a volunteer read verses 18-26.

Ask: **What do you think life for Samuel was like? Do you think Eli was a better foster father than father?** (Encourage discussion. Point out that Samuel's parents had dedicated him to God in a special way and were praying for him.) **What do you think was the difference between Samuel and Eli's sons?** (Encourage them to realize that Eli's sons had turned from God and were putting themselves first; Samuel was choosing to focus on and worship God.) **What do you think about**

verse 25? Explain to the students information from the following passage as you feel necessary. "They had rejected God's protective control, chosen their own selfish way, and deliberately forsaken the counsel of Heaven. In turning away from the angel of the Lord (Ps. 34:7), they sealed their own doom. It was the Philistines who killed them (1 Sam. 4:10, 11), yet God permitted their death because of their refusal to follow Him. 'God does not stand toward the sinner as an executioner of the sentence against transgression; but He leaves the rejecters of His mercy to themselves, to reap that which they have sown' (*The Great Controversy*, p. 36). So it was with Judas! So it is with all who reject the pleadings of the Holy Spirit!" (*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, p. 463).

Have a volunteer read verses 27 to

36. Ask: **What did Hophni and Phinehas focus on instead of God?**

(themselves; their stomachs; money; doing what they wanted) **What did Eli put before God?** (his sons; his comfort—he was unwilling to discipline his sons and face the unpleasantness of making them angry.) **What were the blessings that would come to a priest who would honor God and put Him first?** (His family would be established; he would have God’s blessing; he would have the joy of worshiping and serving God for a long time.)



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Exploring the Bible

You Need:

- Bibles

Divide the students into small groups. Give each group one of the following passages to find and read together. Ask each group to decide

how to explain to the rest of the class how this passage relates to the lesson for today.

1. Luke 1:50-53. (It is similar to the predictions made in 1 Samuel 2:1-10.)
2. Proverbs 12:15. (Eli’s sons would not listen to their father; Eli didn’t really listen to the man who came to warn him.)
3. Isaiah 56:11. (This describes people like Eli’s sons, who focus on themselves.)
4. Psalm 26:8-12. (God will instruct us in the way we should go, as He tried to do for Eli and his sons. Those who listen to and focus on God will be blessed as a result.)

When each group has presented and you have discussed their responses, remind them that



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3

Applying the Lesson

Make It Now**You Need:**

- paper
- pens/pencils

Divide students into working groups again, with an adult facilitator, if possible. Ask them to review the power text, Isaiah 56:11, and the power point, and develop and write out a scenario in the lives of imagined students their age that would demonstrate today's lesson. Suggest that they think about Eli, Eli's sons, and Samuel in a modern-day setting. Have

them include their advice to the persons in the scenario.

Have each small group present their scenario to the large group and discuss their possible advice or answers. When all have finished, focus them on the power point:



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4

Sharing the Lesson

Keep Focused**You Need:**

- paper plates
- markers

Give each student a paper plate and a marker. Ask them to draw concentric circles on their plates—leaving at least a half inch (one centimeter) between the circles. Then have each person write “Jesus” in the inside circle. Explain that these are concentric circles. Ask: **Do you know what concentric circles are?** (circles having a common center) **Who is our common center—the one who should be the focus of all we do?**

Now have the students draw sets of eyes at varying places in each of the concentric circles, all focused on the center. Ask them to tape their plates in places where they'll see them each day. Close by joining together in a circle and singing the chorus of “Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus” (*He Is Our Song*, No. 45).

Challenge students to think of the name of one person with whom they'll share their “circle” picture. Divide into pairs and practice “explaining” how the picture describes the need to worship God by focusing on Him and His power.

Closing

Have the students stand quietly in the circle while you give God your corporate praise and worship, and ask that His Spirit help you all to focus on Him this week, and not on yourselves.

STUDENT LESSON

Problem Priests

Key Text

1 Samuel 2:12-36

How tempting is it to sit rather than standing for hymns in church? How difficult do you find it to close your eyes during prayer? What ways have you distracted others from listening to the sermon? How do your choices affect your ability to truly worship God?

Power Text

"They are dogs with mighty appetites; they never have enough. They are shepherds who lack understanding; they all turn to their own way, each seeks his own gain" (Isaiah 56:11, NIV).

Power Point

**We
worship God
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His power.**

Eli saw a man walking toward him quickly. As he got closer, Eli could see the veins in his forehead bulging and the angry look on his face.

Eli sighed deeply and prepared himself for the bad news that was sure to follow.

"Your sons have no business being priests!" the man began angrily.

Eli knew his sons had no respect for the holy things of the tabernacle, for their positions as priests, or even for God. He had tried to correct them, but nothing changed.

The man continued. "None of the priests are content with the pieces of meat that God instructed us to give them, they take even more from the meat that is ours. But *your* sons . . ." The man paused for a long time, glaring at Eli. "Your sons send their servants to us before the fat has even been offered to the Lord as His portion! The servants demand raw meat for the priests to roast. If we protest and tell them that we must wait until the fat has been offered to the Lord, they threaten us, saying they will take the meat by force!"

Eli closed his eyes and remained silent for a moment. The man was right. Hophni and Phinehas should not be priests. They took advantage of their positions and cheated the people. They did not care about the God they were there to serve. Eli knew, down deep, that he was also not showing respect for God by allowing his sons to continue as priests. But what to do?

Slowly Eli opened his eyes. "I'll talk to them again," he promised.

"I'm not finished yet!" the man snapped. "The word around town is that your sons have also slept with the women who serve near the entrance to the Tent of Meeting!"

Eli's visitor went on for another five minutes, but Eli was already rehearsing the speech he would give to his sons later that day. Hophni and Phinehas thought of nobody but themselves. They had forgotten who they were and why they were at the tabernacle. The Levites were a special people, set aside to serve God. Only a select few could come so close to God's presence, but Eli's sons just didn't seem to care. They didn't worship God anymore; they worshiped themselves.

The angry Israelite finally finished his complaint and left. Eli sighed again. He seemed to be doing a lot of that lately. Getting up from his seat, he went off to find his sons. If only they cared about spiritual things the way the young boy Samuel did.

"Why do you do such things?" Eli asked Hophni and Phinehas when he finally found them. "I hear from all the people about these wicked deeds of yours." Eli went on, trying to caution his sons, attempting to convince them to change. It was as if he were talking to stones. His sons were not interested in hearing what Eli had to say. It was too late for lectures.

One day God sent another man to visit Eli. This man brought a message from God. "Didn't I speak to your ancestors in a special way when you lived in

Egypt? I chose your tribe to have a special place in My community. Your people alone can approach my altar and offer sacrifices to Me. Why do you show Me so little respect by honoring your wicked sons more than you honor Me? They take advantage of My people and take the best portions of every sacrifice.”

Eli’s eyes became very large, and he slumped on his bench. The messenger continued. Eli’s family would not always serve the Lord as priests. The privilege and responsibility were being removed from them because of their carelessness and disrespect for God. Eli’s descendants would not be blessed with long lives. Hophni and Phinehas would end up dying, both on the same day.

God was going to raise up a faithful servant who would serve Him as priest and would honor God in all that he did.

Sabbath

- Do this week’s activity on page 67.

Sunday

- Read “Problem Priests.”
- Begin to learn the power text.
- Draw, or in some way create, a pair of binoculars. Write out your power text and attach it to the binoculars in some way. Place it where you can see it all week.
- Ask God to help you keep in focus all week.

Monday

- Read 1 Samuel 2:12, 13.
- In your Bible study journal, list five to eight ways you can show respect for others in your family. Also list five to eight ways you can show respect for the things of God—either at home or at church.
- Ask God to help you have more respect for Him.

Tuesday

- Read 1 Samuel 2:14-17.
- How do you think the people felt when the offerings they were trying to give to God were stolen by the priests?
- Eli’s sons chose to focus on their needs rather than God’s power. How will you choose to worship God today for His love and power?

Wednesday

- Read 1 Samuel 2:18-26.
- Samuel was the opposite in his behavior to Eli’s wicked sons. He loved to find things to do to be helpful.
- Talk with family members and discover ways you can help each of your family members—and start to do it.
- Thank God that you can worship Him by focusing on Him and His power.

Thursday

- Read 1 Samuel 2:27-33.
- Draw or write a list of things, activities, people that distract you from thinking about God’s power.
- Talk with God about helping you to focus on Him alone.

Friday

- Read 1 Samuel 2:34-36.
- At worship, share the story of Eli and his sons with your family.
- Say the power text from memory.
- Talk with your family about how to make God your life’s focus, not yourself. Think of specific ways you can accomplish that in the coming week.
- Sing the chorus of “Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus” together.